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Wachusett Mountain State Reservation Aims for National Register of Historic Places

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will attend a meeting of the Wachusett Mountain Advisory Council this month to discuss the process of nominating Wachusett Mountain State Reservation for a place on the National Register of Historic Places.

The meeting is scheduled for February 25 at 7 p.m. in the Wachusett Mountain State Reservation visitors center in Princeton. (Severe weather forced the postponement of an earlier meeting.)

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. Listing in the Register will help DCR manage the natural and cultural resources on the mountain, as the agency will have a comprehensive document outlining all historic features at the reservation, why they are important, and specifically, under what historic context they are important. This information will help create a more informed decision-making process for all future planning and operations needs in the reservation. The designation will not affect abutting private landowners.

"With its historic significance and importance to Native Americans, Wachusett Mountain State Reservation is a perfect candidate for the National Register of Historic Places," said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. "We're pleased to be embarking on this nomination process and look forward to the honor of seeing the reservation listed in the Register."

Established in 1900, Wachusett Mountain State Reservation was the second reservation established in the Massachusetts state park system, following Mt. Greylock State Reservation in 1898. The Wachusett reservation, with more than 3,000 acres in Princeton and Westminister, includes 2,006-foot-high Wachusett Mountain as its central natural feature. The park also contains numerous archaeological and historic resources as well as ethnographic resources related to Nipmuc Native Americans. The historic resources include buildings, roads, parkways, stone walls, trails, and cellar holes dating as far back as the 18th century.

In 2008, the Historical Commissions of Princeton and Westminister received a matching grant through the DCR Partnerships Matching Funds Program, for a total of \$10,800, to hire a consultant with broad archaeological, historical, technical, and ethnographic experience to

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document this complex resource. DCR hired Oakfield Research of Concord, and the company began work last November. Oakfield brings significant local experience to the task, having worked on numerous historic and archaeological research projects in Massachusetts and other New England states.

The final nomination is scheduled to be submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission in late spring. Within two years, the Commission will decide whether to list the Reservation in the National Register.

More than 55,000 properties in Massachusetts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and about 250 of those are managed by DCR. They include the Mount Greylock Summit Historic District, Charles River Basin Historic District, and Walden Pond.

The Wednesday, February 25, meeting of the Wachusett Mountain Advisory Council will be at 7 p.m. in the Wachusett Mountain State Reservation visitors center on Mountain Road in Princeton.

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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, and dams, in addition to 278 bridges and miles of roadways. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.